



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE CHILDREN'S BUREAU IN WAR TIME

BY JULIA C. LATHROP

Chief of the Children's Bureau, United States Department of Labor

---

DOES the war make any difference to the work of the Children's Bureau? This question has been asked us repeatedly since the declaration by the United States. There is only one answer: that the work of a Government Bureau directed "to investigate and report upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children" at once must be affected by the fact that this country has entered the war. It is quite true that all the Bureau is able to accomplish is trivial as compared with its task, but that is only an added reason for making its work answer the immediate need as far as possible.

Many questions affecting children in war time present themselves; but none more basic than this: How shall the Government which sends men to fight in Europe deal with their dependents at home? Naturally we turn to the warring countries to find information that may help us in answering these questions new to us but which were met by them also at the beginning of the war, and with which they have been obliged to deal for the last three years.

Soon after war was declared by the United States, the Bureau began a study of the foreign material now available on this side the Atlantic touching the welfare of children during the war period. Official reports,—Austrian, English, French, German, Italian, Russian,—have been read; parliamentary debates, newspapers and other sources searched. Naturally this material is scattered and fragmentary. In some countries official reports have been suspended, or, if continued, have not always reached the United States. Yet enough has been gathered to make clear the emergence of certain distinct tendencies, and for us that is

the important matter—to know which way those most profoundly involved in the war are moving in the matter of protecting infancy and childhood.

If three years of exhausting war have compelled the abandonment of work for the care of maternity and infancy, have lowered the standards of labor, have withdrawn attention from the schools, if the support of the soldier's dependents is unregarded, we should know the facts and be warned in time.

If on the other hand we find a growing sense of the importance of conserving the children of these nations and giving them better care than their parents had, as a measure of national survival, we shall see our way more clearly, and shall be prepared for the sacrifices other nations make to this end. I shall not attempt to discuss the material on various subjects from which the Bureau records show that something has been gleaned, but shall confine myself to offering some excerpts and comparisons on three points:

The protection of infancy and maternity.

The protection of the older child at school and work.

Provision for the soldier and his family and its significance.

Naturally enough Great Britain and her colonies present to this country the most accessible and abundant material upon every subject in the field of child welfare. Of course the protection of maternity and infancy is the alternative of a high infant mortality and before the war the necessity for this protection had been urged increasingly in England by health officials and students of social and economic conditions until, by a strange timeliness, the Parliamentary debates upon a plan for grants in aid of local work culminated in a detailed memorandum dated July 30, 1914, for allowing grants for maternity and child welfare not to exceed one-half the total expense. This new power of grants in aid gave to the Local Government Board the means of making effective for war time the extraordinary efforts to preserve the lives of mothers and babies which the foresighted English authorities demanded.

In common with the other countries from which we have reports the birth rate in Great Britain has fallen since the war and the infant mortality rate has therefore been watched with the more solicitude. It fluctuated slightly for 1914 and 1915, but for 1916 it reached 91 per 1,000 births, the lowest

for any year on record in that country. The reduction is ascribed to a combination of causes,—a cool summer and the increase in wages are credited with a share, but much importance is given to the new measures taken under Government auspices to protect maternity and infancy. In the annual report of the Local Government Board for 1915-1916, Sir Arthur Newsholme, medical officer, begins his statement of the Board's work for maternity and infant care with these words:

“Notwithstanding war conditions there have occurred important extensions of previous work and new work has been initiated.”

He emphasizes the importance of the health visitor, who fills in many respects the place of the visiting or public health nurse with whom we are acquainted, and says:

A steady approach is being made to the standard of one health visitor to 500 births which was laid down as desirable in my memorandum of November, 1915. \* \* \* Public opinion has been roused to the urgency of all measures for promoting maternal and child welfare, and I trust that at the end of the year 1916 it will be possible to report that even greater progress has been made than in 1915 in this respect.

In this connection it may not be amiss to quote from a set of resolutions concerning child welfare drawn up by representatives of public and volunteer bodies in the United States and approved by the Council of National Defense in June of the present year:

Realizing that public health nurses are essential to the carrying on of child welfare work, we recommend that every possible effort be made to prevent these especially trained nurses from being withdrawn from such work, and that public health nursing be officially recognized as war service.

Nor can the subject be left without calling attention to the fact that upon the basis estimated by Newsholme this country could utilize 5,000 public health nurses for maternity and child welfare alone. Including special types—such as tuberculosis, industrial and school nurses,—there were probably 6,000 public health nurses in service at the beginning of our war; 2,500 of these are pledged to war service, and the ranks are already seriously depleted. Yet it has been said recently by a responsible authority that the United States could economically utilize 25,000 public health nurses. An-

other especially relevant paragraph from this 1915-1916 report of the Local Government Board is as follows:

As the result of the war there has not been an expansion of voluntary work for child welfare to the same extent as of official work, the subscriptions of voluntary societies having fallen off. This increases the urgency for more general action on the part of local authorities.

Already the tendency to economize in the support of private work for child welfare is felt here, and it may be found here as in England that public expenditures on a sound social basis must be substituted for private gifts.

In this the third year of the war England organized a National Baby Week Campaign with a Council of which the Queen was patron, the Prime Minister, President, and the President of the Local Government Board, Chairman. Credit was given for Baby Week as an American idea which had "appealed equally to American sentiment and American common sense." The leading reviews published advance articles urging for England the supreme importance of using every possible means to preserve the lives of babies in war time,—one writer stating that in 1915 "death carried off more British babies than soldiers." Later advices show great interest throughout the country in the observances held the first week in July.

In contrast with the vigorous campaign in England, which has been three years at war, is the fact that our declaration of war on April 6 so distracted attention from mere babies that the May celebrations here were fewer than last year. Of course Baby Week is a device for arousing public opinion and the seeming drop in interest because of the war certainly does not mean that we shall await the waste of life in battle before we gather force to put an end to the waste of life in the cradle.

Little information is available from Germany and I shall only quote from a paper on Infant Welfare Work in War Time by Dr. Grace L. Meigs of the Children's Bureau which discusses the reports of Drs. Langstein and Rott, director and assistant at the *Kaiserin-Augusta-Victoria-Haus zur Bekämpfung der Säuglingsterblichkeit in Deutschen Reiche*, the official headquarters of the movement for the protection of infancy in Germany:

Their articles published in the early part of 1915 tell us only of conditions in the early months of the war but they are interesting as

showing the lines on which the work was laid out in Germany for the war period. \* \* \* Very soon after the beginning of the war a meeting of representatives of infant welfare work in Berlin took place at the Reichstag. The resolution to continue infant welfare work and to increase it was expressed, and this resolution was communicated to all other German communities.

A few months later, in June, 1915, Dr. Rott reported on a questionnaire sent to officials and private organizations in over 375 communities of over 15,000 inhabitants, and to 788 infant welfare centers, to 266 institutions for the care of mothers and babies, and to 271 day nurseries. The object of this study was to find out the effect of the war on the great system of infant welfare work which had been developed in Germany before the war. Eighty-one per cent of the communities answered the questionnaire. It was found that in only two per cent of the communities had work decreased; in ten per cent it had increased; and in the remainder, eighty-eight per cent, it had continued unimpaired. The centers which had been closed were those which depended on private subscription. The loss of physicians and nurses to war work was remarked upon in many communities; especially characteristic of private associations was a tendency of the sisters who had been carrying on infant welfare work to leave it for active military duty.

Dr. Langstein refers to the special division for the care of infants in Berlin which is part of the Red Cross. The division stipulates that the mother shall bring her baby regularly to an infant welfare station. He says:

This fund gives to all mothers who are shown to be in need, and who wish to take care of their children in their own homes, a monthly allowance; and fulfills therewith a task which is not only successful as regards health but is also a great social task. I hope that the existence of this allowance may not end with the peace which we hope will soon come.

In France the reports on maternal and infant welfare work deal especially with Paris, where it was organized early in August, 1914, under military auspices with the title "*Office Centrale d'assistance maternelle et infantile*," and it is stated that the medical protection of mothers and babies had never been so good in Paris as during the early period of the war. Infant mortality in Paris declined for the first two years of the war. There has been prolonged discussion in the French Academy of Medicine as to the employment of pregnant women and nursing mothers. The interest

aroused by the discussions makes plain that however much difference of opinion there may be as to the best way to protect mothers and babies, there is the deepest public sense of the importance of their protection.

Dr. Meigs in drawing conclusions from her review makes several suggestions, among which the following are especially timely:

That the chief preventive measure for protecting babies is to insure their intelligent care and nursing by healthy mothers in their own homes.

That the preventive work for infant and maternal welfare, already established, should be strengthened and extended; and that nothing should be considered more important in war time.

Maternity insurance or government allowances in some form are found without exception in the warring countries. In some cases these have been much increased since the war began. This is notably true as to Germany and France.

The standards of life are so different in this country that the actual methods of safeguarding maternity in Europe would apply only with much modification, and the whole subject of maternity protection, urgent as it is here, must be worked out by our own experimenting, upon a scale commensurate with our standard of living.

But what of older children? We find that our next-door neighbor Canada has sent one-nineteenth of her total population to the front, yet she has not relaxed her labor standards for children. New Zealand has sent to the war one-fourteenth of her population, yet she has not changed her restrictions of woman and child labor. Australia has maintained her labor standards with no important variation.

These countries are all new, vigorous, remote from the great centers of war industry. What is the attitude in England and France?

After two years of war, during which emergency exemptions were made in both countries, M. Albert Thomas, French Minister of Munitions, epitomized in the following brief sentences the importance of preserving labor laws not only for the sake of the workers but in the interest of sustained output:

The experience of war time has only demonstrated the necessity—technical, economic and even physiological—of the labor laws enacted before the war. In our legislation secured in time of peace we shall find the conditions for a better and more intense production during the war.

The reports of the British Committee on the Health of Munition Workers had been read with great interest in this country even before the United States entered the war. The findings of these painstaking studies become of much greater interest now when the demands of war contracts must bring us to the same difficulties they discuss unless we are willing to learn by the experience of other countries. They show the waste involved in the long hours worked during the war and urge the restoring of restrictions in such statements as the following, extracted from the reports to Parliament:

Even during the urgent claims of a war the problem must always be to obtain the maximum output from the individual worker which is compatible with the maintenance of his health. In war time the workmen will be willing, as they are showing in so many directions, to forego comfort and to work nearer to the margin of accumulating fatigue than in times of peace, but the country can not afford the extravagance of paying for work done during incapacity from fatigue just because so many hours are spent upon it, or the further extravagance of urging armies of workers towards relative incapacity by neglect of physiological law.

Conditions of work are accepted without question and without complaint which, immediately detrimental to output, would if continued be ultimately disastrous to health. It is for the nation to safeguard the devotion of its workers by its foresight and watchfulness lest irreparable harm be done to body and mind both in this generation and the next.

Very young girls show almost immediate symptoms of lassitude, exhaustion, and impaired vitality under the influence of employment at night. A very similar impression was made by the appearance of large numbers of young boys who had been working at munitions for a long time on alternate night and day shifts.

It is particularly to be noted that in England the war exemptions to the factory laws have not included a lowering of the age limits for factory work.

While there was confusion and hardship incidental to the organization of war industries in England, we are told that as early as 1915 some employers returned voluntarily to regular labor standards. The British Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops writes in May, 1916:

The tendency grew as the year passed to substitute a system of shifts for the long day followed by overtime, and this is particularly reported of munition factories in the Midlands and in Sheffield. \* \* \* The number of days on which overtime was actually worked tended in many factories to decrease as experience grew of accumulating fatigue and lessened output. Probably for similar reasons Sunday labor also has tended latterly to decrease.



## CHILDREN'S BUREAU IN WAR TIME 741

Again in his report dated April, 1917, the Chief Inspector says:

It is fairly well recognized now that continuous and excessive overtime very soon produces lassitude and slackness among the workers and injuriously affects efficiency and both the quantity and quality of the work. In one weaving factory special records were kept when the normal hours of  $55\frac{1}{2}$  a week were increased for 16 weeks to 58 and for 4 weeks to  $65\frac{1}{2}$ . The output did not increase in proportion and the difference was more marked when working the  $65\frac{1}{2}$  hour weeks.

Labor in general is considered by the inspector but it need not be pointed out that any hard conditions of labor bear most heavily on immature persons.

For the greater part of the first two years of the war France allowed boys and girls under eighteen to work at night in special cases. She has now restored the prohibition of night work for girls under eighteen and provides that other night workers shall be subject to medical supervision. The official *Bulletin des Usines de Guerre* for July 31, 1916, shows the basis for such regulations:

With the continuance of the war it becomes necessary not only to find the best possible disposition of the forces available for our war industries but also to avoid every cause for exhaustion or weakening of the labor employed in our factories. There is a close relation between the conditions in which we place our workers and the improvement or the increase of our war products. For the very sake of the national defense we must conserve all their physical strength for the workers who are responsible for the manufacture of arms and for the output of our factories.

At a meeting held in Washington in honor of the Labor Members of the British Commission sent to the United States soon after our declaration of war, Hon. James H. Thomas, M. P., was asked about the necessity for child labor. Few who heard his reply will soon forget it. "I cannot conceive," he said, "that the assistance the United States can give to the allied cause is dependent upon any alteration in the child labor laws of this country."

But mere restriction of child labor does not go far. Florence Kelley's dictum that the best child labor law is a compulsory education law is illustrated by recent action in England and France. France has now under consideration an education bill which would in effect raise the standard of labor protection in war time. It was introduced in the Chamber of Deputies in March by M. Viviani and closely resembles a bill passed by the French Senate in

June, 1916. This proposal to establish a system of continuation schools and to require part-time school attendance during working hours by all working children under seventeen years of age has the endorsement of the Minister of Commerce and of business interests in all parts of the country.

According to Commissioner Finley of New York, recently returned from an inspection of French schools in France, the ages for leaving elementary school have not been modified. The accustomed men teachers have gone into the war to the number of thirty thousand, leaving the schools sadly crippled; for the French village schoolmaster usually lives with his family adjacent to the school, holding a permanent position and exercising the kindly authority and leadership which Daudet's familiar story of the last day of French teaching in Alsace set forth. It is not strange that the saucy contrast of Hansi's pictures of an Alsatian village under German tutelage caused that artist's arrest by the German authorities just before the outbreak of the war. Now women must take the place of men teachers; older children must work. But the elementary schools go on with as little change as possible, we are told by Mr. Finley.

France is making plans for physical training in her schools and the plans of the English Departmental Committee for Physical Training are carefully worked out in the report quoted later. It is noteworthy that neither the French plans nor the recommendations of the English report include military training or drill. After the Franco-Prussian War, France tried military drill in the schools, but abandoned it fifteen years or more ago. On the other hand, the recruiting stations of England have shown the need in that country of better physical care for children during the years of school life. We shall soon see what the draft examinations will reveal here as to the health and vigor of young men of varying opportunities for development.

We find that no new law exempting children from school attendance has been passed in England since the war began, but the power to exempt which was already in the law has been used to allow the dismissal of children for farm labor and "light employment." These exemptions, like those for factory work, are much regretted by the educational authorities, according to the English reports.

There is much complaint of the breakdown of the English schools. Other elements besides the exemptions are involved, however. We are told that many men teachers have gone to the front, whose places have been filled by women if at all, and necessarily the women have been less well trained, less experienced, and generally at a disadvantage in preserving discipline in schools for English boys who, unlike American lads in school, are not accustomed to feminine authority. The unusual degree of juvenile delinquency is ascribed in part to the relaxation of school conditions.

Present opinion as to school needs in England is shown by the Final Report of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in Relation to Employment after the War. This report, with the accompanying summaries of evidence and appendices, was presented to Parliament in the present year. It points out by the testimony of witnesses representing employers, labor, teachers and educational authorities, social workers and others, the urgent importance of protecting the school life of children as the only fruitful way of protecting their working life. It sets aside as mischievous all the old exemptions and half-time provisions, and the summary of recommendations begins as follows:

We therefore recommend that a uniform Elementary School-leaving age of fourteen be established by statute for all districts, urban and rural, and that all exemptions, total or partial, from compulsory attendance below that age be abolished, \* \* \* that difficulties of poverty be met in other ways than by regarding poverty as a reasonable excuse for non-attendance.

The most radical proposal is that compulsory education be continued to the age of eighteen by day continuation classes, not less than eight hours a week for forty weeks in the year, and that where there is already a statutory limitation upon the hours of labor the permitted hours of labor be reduced by the number of those required for the continuation classes.

Great emphasis is laid upon the importance of continuous physical training, medical inspection, and clinical treatment, where necessary, up to the age of eighteen.

The need of protecting the education of English children urged by the Departmental Committee is recognized formally by the Board of Education, which has submitted

to Parliament a budget for 1917-1918 showing an increase of nearly four million pounds over last year,—the largest increase over a preceding year known in the history of English education. The purpose of this additional sum is to raise teachers' salaries, restore school buildings to school use, and to increase school efficiency.

The best of our own public schools are, we may believe, the best equipped, the best taught in the world, but these are far too few. They are chiefly in cities,—seldom in the country. Disgraceful illiteracy figures for rural areas where children work as farm laborers still meet us on the census pages.

The best of our school attendance laws like those of New York, Ohio, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Illinois, are better than those proposed by the Departmental Committee, leaving aside the proposal for compulsory continuation schools to the age of eighteen. Our worst laws are such as make possible our illiteracy rate among native-born American children, and the intermediate laws are far from satisfactory.

If we may judge by the eagerness with which South Carolina children have taken advantage of the compulsory school law passed in that State last winter we may also find that the Federal child labor law which went into effect September 1, 1917, will aid in securing that uniformity of school requirements which the English report wisely urges, and will have the good effect of a compulsory education law if public interest is enlisted to provide good schools.

The study of English and French experience at the end of three years of war certainly justifies this country, now the strongest and richest on earth, in determining that its children shall be kept at school as usual unless better methods of teaching in the interests of the children solely can be invented. A continuous census of all available sources of adult labor is the reasonable prerequisite for any discussion of allowing child labor, and this is still lacking.

The Children's Bureau had not gone far in the study of foreign experience in war time before it became clear that recommendations as to methods and expedients for the protection of children in any country calling a large army into being must be conditioned upon the provision made by the Government itself for the pay of soldiers, and the experience of the countries giving a valuation to the individual family unit and its maintenance which could be considered

most analogous to our own became of great importance. This valuation was found in most marked degree in the countries whose newness and freedom of development and prosperity would naturally lead to a sound liberality in the treatment of their soldiers. Pre-eminent among this group stands Canada, our nearest neighbor.

It was felt that the United States should examine in a technical manner the administration of the Canadian plan, especially as to the new feature of insurance. The Children's Bureau was exceedingly fortunate to be able to secure the generous aid of Captain S. Herbert Wolfe of New York, a well-known actuary, and the chairman of the Social Service Committee of one of the great New York hospitals. Captain Wolfe went to Canada early in May and made a report which was at once published by the Bureau under the title of *Care of Dependents of Enlisted Men in Canada*. The Canadian plan leads toward a truly modern conception of the responsibility of the Government to the men who form an army, and is especially significant for the skill with which provisions for re-education, protection of dependents and insurance of the soldier are woven together so as to stimulate self-respecting effort in returning to civil life, and to offer genuine safeguards against helpless poverty.

As a further contribution for the consideration of the best form of soldiers' compensation, the Bureau has prepared under special instructions from the Secretary of Labor and with the direction and assistance of Captain Wolfe a report entitled *Governmental Provisions in the United States and Foreign Countries for Members of the Military Forces and Their Families*.

These studies were used in the preparation of the Administration bill for soldiers' compensation and insurance which was drafted by the Honorable Julian W. Mack and which has now passed both houses of Congress.

If a country—a democratic country—requires of its citizens the hazard of their lives can it do less than provide for their families an assured status?

One of the "June Resolutions" approved by the Council of National Defense was as follows:

We urge that immediate steps be taken to secure the adoption of a Governmental plan to assure adequate support for soldiers and their families. This plan should include financial and medical provision, facilities for the re-education of the injured soldier, and the re-es-

tablishment of the family. Such a plan promptly put into operation would have more effect in promoting child welfare than any other measure which the Government could adopt on behalf of the dependents of men in service.

We wish to see for the soldier above all the recognition that his children have the right to a home and the care of their mother while he is away. Allowances must be made which will not send young mothers out to work and leave babies unattended to die at twice the rate of the babies of more prosperous mothers; older children must have schooling—not the bare legal requirement but what their own powers justify. Comfortable homes with good mothers to give the warmth of affection as well as wholesome food and bodily comfort are the best possible safeguard against the costly waste of juvenile delinquency. Soldiers' families must have all this. Words fail when one thinks of the young fathers who will go into the army if the war continues. This much is sure, their country must see to it that they do not return to find democracy set at naught here because their households have been neglected by the nation which sent them away. And if they do not come back? Then more than ever soldiers' families must have all this. An infinite number of perplexing readjustments, of great sacrifices and very real hardships await many of the civilian population as war goes on. Let us vow that they shall fall upon those who can bear them—not upon mothers and children.

We have entered into a war to make democracy prevail; to help secure for others that political and social organization which gives to us the basis for our standard of living, for the nurture and education of this nation's children,—not a few choice children of a favored class, but all children.

JULIA C. LATHROP.